United Nations S/2013/120

Security Council

Distr.: General
27 February 2013

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

Reporting period from 30 October 2012 to 28 February 2013

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) since my previous report of 14 November 2012 (S/2012/837).

2. Against the backdrop of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon continued to hold and the situation south of the Litani River and along the Blue Line generally remained stable. Although there was no substantive progress towards implementation of their respective outstanding obligations under resolution 1701 (2006), the parties maintained their commitment to the resolution. During the reporting period, both parties sought to reassure the other, through the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), that they did not wish to see any resumption of hostilities and, in some instances, sought to develop further security and liaison arrangements with UNIFIL.

3. Nevertheless, unidentified armed groups twice attempted to launch rockets from Lebanon into northern Israel, coinciding with the timing of the conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel from 14 to 21 November 2012. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces responded to the outbreak of hostilities by enhancing their coordinated activities in the UNIFIL area of operations.

4. The President of Lebanon, Michel Sleiman, visited UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura on 18 January 2013 to express appreciation for the work of UNIFIL and highlight the partnership between the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

5. Violent incidents continued to occur across the Lebanese-Syrian border during the reporting period, although casualties decreased substantially. At least three Lebanese citizens, including a child, were killed by shots fired from the Syrian Arab Republic, while forces of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic were responsible for further incidents of cross-border shelling that caused material damage. The Lebanese Armed Forces reported continued smuggling of weapons

destined for the Syrian Arab Republic. Members of a group of fighters crossing from Lebanon into the Syrian Arab Republic were reported to have been killed by forces of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic near the Syrian town of Tal Kalakh. The Syrian authorities returned 10 bodies for burial in Lebanon. Nine of the pilgrims abducted on 22 May 2012 in the Syrian Arab Republic remain detained.

6. The incident in Tal Kalakh prompted a further round of fighting in Tripoli between the Sunni community of Bab al-Tabbaneh and the adjacent Alawite neighbourhood of Jebel Mohsen, which lasted from 4 to 10 December and left 17 people dead and more than 40 wounded. It was the sixth outbreak of violence in Tripoli since the beginning of 2012. On 4 February, a Lebanese court issued an arrest warrant for the head of the Syrian National Security Bureau, General Ali Mamlouk, in connection with the investigation into the Michel Samaha case, on which I have previously reported. On 20 February, a judge issued an indictment against the three suspects in the case.

7. The President of Lebanon led consultations with all Lebanese parties in the period after the assassination, on 19 October 2012, of Brigadier-General Wisam al-Hassan. The investigation into the assassination is continuing but no perpetrators have yet been identified. Members of 14 March maintained a boycott of the Government and of the National Dialogue, which did not meet during the reporting period. Preparations for parliamentary elections continued but were overshadowed by disagreements over a possible new electoral law. The elections are due in June.

8. The number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon continued to rise sharply. As at 25 February, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that in excess of 305,000 Syrian refugees were receiving assistance in Lebanon, more than double the figure cited in my previous report and the highest number in any of the countries neighbouring the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, some 31,500 Palestinian refugees had been displaced from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon. I discussed the efforts and needs of Lebanon in tackling the challenge of refugee inflows in my meetings with the President, on 30 January in Kuwait City on the margins of the International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria, and with the Prime Minister, Najib Mikati, on 25 January in Davos, Switzerland, on the margins of the World Economic Forum.

II. Implementation of resolution 1701 (2006)

A. Situation in the Force's area of operations

9. The situation in the Force's area of operations generally remained stable during the reporting period. Calm prevailed along the Blue Line and the parties worked closely with UNIFIL to strengthen liaison and coordination arrangements. A few incidents did occur, however, with the potential to spark a serious escalation.

10. The outbreak of conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel on 14 November significantly raised tensions along the Blue Line. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces acted immediately to increase their patrolling activities, with a focus on preventing any hostile activities in the area. On 19 November, the Lebanese Armed Forces informed UNIFIL that they had discovered and dismantled two 107-mm rockets ready to be fired from a crude launching platform in the area between

Mazraat Islamiye and Darjhat (Sector East). On 21 November, UNIFIL heard explosions in Sector East of its area of operations and received information from both the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces shortly thereafter that two rockets that had been fired towards Israel from the vicinity of Al Mansurah, located north of the Litani River outside the UNIFIL area of operations, had landed near Sarda in Lebanon, just north of the Blue Line. The Lebanese Armed Forces located the launching site the following day, where they also found a third rocket that had failed to launch. To date, the points of impact have not been located. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces are currently investigating the incidents.

11. On 17 December, an explosion occurred in the vicinity of Tayr Harfa, approximately 2 km north of the Blue Line (Sector West). Local authorities told UNIFIL that the explosion related to the controlled demolition of a cluster bomb. UNIFIL and Lebanese Armed Forces patrols sent to locate and investigate the explosion were temporarily prevented from reaching the suspected location by a large number of vehicles parked on the road. UNIFIL was able to gain access to the site within two hours of the explosion. Its investigation team observed that the ground at the site had been levelled recently with fresh soil, with clear signs of bulldozer tracks. UNIFIL has requested authorization to excavate the site and additional information from the Lebanese Armed Forces. Its investigation is continuing.

12. The Israel Defense Forces continued to violate Lebanese airspace almost daily during the reporting period, with overflights of Lebanese territory and territorial waters by unmanned aerial vehicles and fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets. On 29 January alone, there were some 34 air violations involving multiple fighter jets. On 28 November, at least six Israeli attack helicopters entered Lebanese airspace and flew at low altitude in the general vicinity of Tyre, an action that could have resulted in a serious security incident, in addition to putting at risk UNIFIL helicopters normally operating in the area. UNIFIL protested about all the air violations to the Israel Defense Forces, calling upon the authorities to cease them immediately. The Government of Lebanon also protested, while the Government of Israel continued to maintain that the overflights were a necessary security measure.

13. The Israel Defense Forces continued to occupy the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). UNIFIL is still awaiting a response from Israel regarding security arrangements to facilitate the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from the area, proposed to both parties on 25 June 2011. The Lebanese Armed Forces conveyed their approval on 19 July 2011, while the Israel Defense Forces indicated that the proposal would require the approval of the Government. Pending a response from the Government of Israel, UNIFIL is conducting bilateral consultations with the parties in an effort to facilitate the secure use by the local Lebanese population of the SD1 road, which lies just north of the occupied area. Among other security concerns, the Israel Defense Forces continue to express their concern about smuggling activities from Lebanon into Israel that allegedly pass through Ghajar. The overall objective remains the complete withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from northern Ghajar and the adjacent area north of the Blue Line.

14. During the reporting period, there were a number of ground violations of the Blue Line by Lebanese shepherds and farmers, primarily in the Shab'a Farms area and in the vicinity of Blida and Meiss El Jebel. While some of the violations were

inadvertent, others were committed by civilians claiming to own land south of the Blue Line. On 28 October, civilians violated the Blue Line near Bastara, in the Shab'a Farms area, by approximately 30 m and began to erect a fence around some olive trees. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces subsequently established that the fence was south of the Blue Line, and UNIFIL removed the fence on 21 December. On 24 January, a Lebanese Member of Parliament, accompanied by some 18 civilians, including journalists, violated the Blue Line in the same area by about 15 m and delivered a press statement. UNIFIL lodged a protest regarding the incidents with the Lebanese Armed Forces. On 31 October, the Israel Defense Forces apprehended a shepherd alleged to have violated the Blue Line in another part of Shab'a Farms and returned him the following day. UNIFIL has shared the findings of its investigation into the incident with the parties for comment before finalizing its report. UNIFIL has appealed to both parties to refrain from taking unilateral action when violations occur and instead avail themselves of the UNIFIL liaison and coordination arrangements.

15. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces continued their daily coordinated operational activities, including co-located checkpoints, coordinated patrolling and joint training exercises on land and at sea. UNIFIL conducted an average of almost 10,000 activities per month, including some 1,100 in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces continued to carry out joint counter-rocket launching operations, which were increased during and in the aftermath of the Gaza conflict in November, at a monthly average of approximately 400 operations. For its part, UNIFIL continued to maintain seven co-located checkpoints along the Litani River and carried out regular helicopter patrols of its area of operations.

16. Owing to the multiple security responsibilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces throughout the country, the Armed Forces deployment in the area of operations remained at the same level as during the preceding period, consisting of approximately two brigades and two battalions, in addition to support elements. The Armed Forces face challenges in undertaking new tasks with UNIFIL in southern Lebanon owing to a lack of capacity, including a shortage of barracks and equipment. As part of its efforts to help the Armed Forces to enhance their capabilities, UNIFIL donated generator sets, spare parts and fuel tanks to the units deployed in the area of operations.

17. UNIFIL generally enjoyed full freedom of movement throughout its area of operations during the reporting period. Nevertheless, there were a few incidents when that freedom was challenged by local civilians. On 29 November, a UNIFIL patrol was blocked by a group of civilians in Rshaf (Sector West), after the patrol inadvertently approached a mosque for women. The civilians became aggressive when the UNIFIL personnel refused to alight from their vehicles and caused costly damage to the vehicles' exteriors. On three separate occasions (31 October, 12 December and 6 January), there were incidents in Ayta ash-Sha'b, during which UNIFIL patrols were blocked by civilian vehicles and United Nations and personal equipment and items were taken forcibly from UNIFIL personnel. On the third occasion, UNIFIL personnel and visiting international journalists were held for an hour by local civilians before being allowed to leave. On 9 February, a UNIFIL mine-clearance team was obstructed near Blida (Sector East) by a group of civilians. Following a scuffle with a peacekeeper, the civilians snatched a camera. Another incident involved an attempt by a civilian to rob UNIFIL personnel by pointing a shotgun at a UNIFIL vehicle.

18. In most cases, Lebanese Armed Forces personnel swiftly arrived on the scene and played a critical role in bringing the incidents to an end. They were able to retrieve some of the confiscated equipment and return it to UNIFIL. They also arrested the civilian who attempted to rob a UNIFIL patrol at gunpoint.

19. In another incident, on 26 January, a logistics convoy taking UNIFIL civilian personnel from Beirut to the area of operations mistakenly left the designated route and, when it sought to turn back, was stopped by a group of individuals armed with assault rifles in the vicinity of Mazraat el Aarqoûb, outside the area of operations. The armed individuals briefly held the convoy, searched all UNIFIL personnel and took some electronic equipment before escorting it back to the designated route.

20. UNIFIL lodged a protest about all the incidents with the Lebanese Armed Forces and emphasized to the Lebanese authorities that the primary responsibility for ensuring the Force's freedom of movement and the safety and security of its personnel lay with them. During the reporting period, UNIFIL continued to focus the attention of the Lebanese military judicial authorities on outstanding investigations into such incidents. The Force Commander took up the matter with the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, General Jean Kahwaji, and other senior security officials. He also addressed local authorities, representatives of military, security and Customs officials, and local parliamentarians on the importance of full freedom of movement and of support on the part of local communities for UNIFIL. All his interlocutors emphasized their strong support for UNIFIL, as did the President during his visit to the Force's headquarters. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces are currently working on a joint outreach initiative to further explain the Force's mandate and modus operandi to the local population.

21. These isolated incidents notwithstanding, the attitude of the local population towards UNIFIL remained positive. Through its regular liaison activities with local communities, UNIFIL helped to address issues with the potential to trigger tensions inside the area of operations. For example, it actively facilitated and contributed to the construction of a water storage tank near the Blue Line in Blida (Sector East). As part of its activities aimed at building confidence among the local population, UNIFIL continued to provide community services such as medical, dental, veterinary and educational assistance and to implement quick-impact projects. It also coordinated with a wide range of civilian actors in planning and organizing joint outreach activities, including two trade fairs with local agricultural cooperatives, and events on the occasion of the international days for peace, gender and security, children and persons with disabilities.

22. UNIFIL continued to provide assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces in taking steps to establish an area free of armed personnel, assets and weapons, other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL, between the Blue Line and the Litani River. This continues to be a long-term objective. The above-mentioned rocket incidents demonstrate that weapons and hostile armed elements ready to use them remain, including in the UNIFIL area of operations.

23. The Government of Israel continued to allege that Hizbullah had been building up its military positions and units inside populated areas in southern Lebanon and that unauthorized weapons were being transferred into Lebanon, including into the UNIFIL area of operations. Where specific information is received regarding the illegal presence of armed personnel or weapons inside its area of operations, UNIFIL, in cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, remains determined to act

with all means available within its mandate and to the full extent provided for in its rules of engagement, as described in my previous reports. UNIFIL does not, however, proactively search for weapons in the south. It visits locations after receiving an alert, in coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces. According to its mandate, UNIFIL cannot enter private property unless there is credible evidence of a violation of resolution 1701 (2006), including an imminent threat of hostile activity emanating from that specific location.

24. During the reporting period, UNIFIL observed unauthorized armed personnel and weapons in its area of operations in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) on a number of occasions. As described above, there were two rocket incidents and an explosion in the vicinity of Tayr Harfa. UNIFIL is not in a position to determine whether the rockets discovered in the area of operations during the reporting period were smuggled into or already present in the area. To date, UNIFIL has neither been provided with, nor has found, evidence of the unauthorized transfer of arms into its area of operations. The Lebanese Armed Forces command continued to state that it would act immediately to put a stop to any illegal activity in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006) and relevant Government decisions. Several items of unexploded ordnance from the 2006 war and earlier were discovered by civilians, the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL personnel. On one occasion, a damaged box of eight grenades with Hebrew inscriptions was discovered. In all cases, Lebanese military specialists destroyed the ordnance.

25. A number of civilians were observed by UNIFIL carrying hunting weapons and engaging in hunting activities. On a few occasions, the Lebanese Armed Forces detained the hunters and confiscated their weapons. In other cases, the hunters swiftly left the scene after being spotted by UNIFIL or Lebanese Armed Forces patrols. The Lebanese Armed Forces released a press statement on 24 November in which they reaffirmed the ban on hunting, in particular inside the UNIFIL area of operations.

26. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force continued to carry out its dual mandate of conducting maritime interdiction operations in the area of maritime operations and training Lebanese navy personnel. Since my previous report, the Lebanese navy and Customs officials have inspected 307 vessels in order to verify that there were no unauthorized arms or related materiel on board. The Maritime Task Force and Lebanese naval forces conducted 13 workshops on land and 20 at-sea training exercises. Lebanese navy personnel continued to develop their capabilities through the conduct of eight on-the-job training exercises in maritime interdiction operations. There were some limitations to joint activities resulting from the lack of adequate Lebanese navy vessels that could endure the inclement weather conditions.

27. There were a number of incidents along the line of buoys. UNIFIL observed Israeli navy units dropping 10 depth charges and firing 3 flares, in addition to warning shots on 10 occasions, along the buoy line, reportedly to ward off Lebanese fishing boats in the vicinity of the line. UNIFIL has no mandate to monitor the line, which the Government of Israel installed unilaterally and which the Government of Lebanon does not recognize.

B. Security and liaison arrangements

28. The Force's liaison and coordination arrangements with the parties continued to function well and on several occasions both parties sought to further develop security and liaison arrangements with UNIFIL.

29. Daily interaction and liaison activities between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces continued at their established high and effective level. UNIFIL also maintained effective liaison and coordination with the Israel Defense Forces, although there was no progress in establishing a liaison office in Tel Aviv.

30. The tripartite forum remained the key mechanism for addressing security and military operational issues relating to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). In addition to serving as a forum for discussion of violations and incidents that occur between the parties, the forum is a confidence-building mechanism. It offers a platform through which UNIFIL can facilitate practical arrangements and localized understandings on the ground between the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces that would remove possible points of friction, defuse tension in potential flashpoints, stabilize the situation and build confidence.

31. Following consultations in the tripartite forum, UNIFIL, for example, cleared debris that was blocking water from running through a culvert close to the Blue Line and restored the flow of water to prevent the flooding of local farmland near Kfar Kila (Sector East). UNIFIL continues to work with the parties to put in place a more sustainable solution that will prevent future flooding of this area. It is also exploring ways to relieve tensions in Bastara, where local farmers cultivate olive trees south of the Blue Line, and build confidence along the Hasbani/Wazzani River, where local entrepreneurs have established a series of resorts on the Lebanese side of the river along the Blue Line, as previously reported.

32. Progress in visibly marking the Blue Line continued at a steady pace. As at 13 February, the number of points agreed between the parties for marking stood at 257, of a total of 473. UNIFIL has to date cleared access to 234 points, 201 of which have been measured. Some 163 markers have been constructed and 145 verified by both parties. In accordance with the recommendations of the strategic review, UNIFIL began exploratory bilateral discussions with the parties to address those points along the Blue Line that had been deemed contentious or problematic. In agreement with the Israel Defense Forces and the Lebanese Armed Forces, UNIFIL also initiated refurbishment works of the previously constructed Blue Line markers.

33. After the Israel Defense Forces and the Lebanese Armed Forces expressed their interest in exploring ways to tackle questions of maritime security with UNIFIL, as mentioned in my previous report, the Force initiated preliminary bilateral consultations with the parties with a view to ascertaining their respective positions and identifying potential commonalities. On the basis of those preliminary discussions, UNIFIL also began work on a draft proposal for practical maritime security arrangements that it plans to share with the parties for their comments.

34. In line with the priorities identified by the strategic review, UNIFIL continued to work closely with the Lebanese Armed Forces to increase capacity through the strategic dialogue mechanism. The strategic dialogue remains a separate but integral component of the overall Lebanese Armed Forces capability development plan. UNIFIL, in close coordination with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, continued exploring the possibility of establishing a coordination mechanism between UNIFIL, the Lebanese Armed Forces, the Government of Lebanon and international donors, including troop-contributing countries and other Member States, to ensure a comprehensive approach and provision of support to the strategic dialogue mechanism.

C. Disarming armed groups

35. Resolution 1701 (2006) calls for the full implementation of the relevant provisions of the Taif Agreement, and of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), which require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon, so that there will be no weapons without the consent of the Government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon.

36. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups outside the control of the Lebanese State, in violation of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006), continues to restrict the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. Hizbullah has continued to acknowledge openly that it maintains a substantial military capacity separate from that of the Lebanese State. It claims that its arms serve as a deterrent against potential aggression from Israel.

37. The further round of violence in Tripoli from 4 to 10 December and other violent incidents involving arms during the reporting period again demonstrated the threat posed by the proliferation of arms outside the control of the State. The sixth round of violence in Tripoli in 2012, the intensity of the violence and the heavy calibre weapons used marked a worrying escalation. Calm was restored after the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed heavily in the neighbourhoods affected and at strategic points around the city following the adoption, on 9 December, of a new security plan by the Higher Defence Council. Although the situation has since remained generally calm, there was an incident on 18 January involving a convoy carrying the Minister for Youth, Faisal Karami, which left five people injured.

38. The Lebanese Armed Forces have continued to deploy as needed elsewhere to defuse political tensions, subdue violence and act against those responsible for it. On 12 November, they deployed to contain an outbreak of violence in Sidon after a clash between Hizbullah supporters and followers of Sheikh Ahmad al-Asir left three people dead and at least four wounded. The Lebanese Armed Forces sustained casualties and losses in their efforts to maintain law and order, including on 1 February when two soldiers were killed in a raid to arrest a wanted militant in Arsal. The attack was broadly condemned and efforts to arrest the perpetrators continue.

39. The President remained strongly committed to the resumption of the National Dialogue, which has not met since 20 September. At that time, he had presented a paper setting out an initial vision for a comprehensive national defence strategy centred on the principle of the exclusive right of the Lebanese Armed Forces to the use of force and frameworks and mechanisms for control and use of arms belonging to Hizbullah. The 14 March leadership has declined to participate in the meetings since the assassination of Brigadier-General Wisam al-Hassan on 19 October.

40. There was no progress in the dismantling of military bases maintained by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada. In 2006, the National Dialogue decided that those bases should be dismantled and the United Nations has repeatedly supported that call. The existence of the bases continues to compromise Lebanese sovereignty and impede the ability of the State to monitor effectively and control parts of the Lebanese-Syrian border.

41. In the Ein el-Hillweh Palestinian refugee camp there were heightened tensions on 23 January and again on 18 and 19 February between groups respectively loyal to the regime and the opposition in the Syrian Arab Republic. The clashes were relatively limited and contained by the Palestinian security committee in the camp. Otherwise, the situation in the camps was generally quiet. On 22 January, the Government of Lebanon undertook to fund the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee for three years.

D. Arms embargo and border control

42. In resolution 1701 (2006), the Security Council decided that all States were to prevent the sale or the supply of arms and related materiel to entities or individuals in Lebanon by their nationals, or from their territories or using their flag vessels or aircraft. It also called upon the Government of Lebanon to secure its borders and other entry points so as to prevent the entry into Lebanon without its consent of arms and related materiel.

43. Representatives of the Government of Israel have consistently alleged that there are significant, continuing arms transfers to Hizbullah across the Lebanese-Syrian border. The United Nations takes these allegations seriously but is not in a position to independently verify them. Following elections in Israel in January 2013, members of the Government of Israel publicly stated that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic intended to transfer advanced weapons systems and, potentially, non-conventional weapons to Hizbullah. Ministers warned that such arms transfers would constitute a significant threat and that Israel would act to prevent them from taking place. Senior representatives of Hizbullah maintained that they had no intention of acquiring chemical weapons.

44. In a letter dated 31 January 2013 (A/67/721-S/2013/70), the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic reported that, on 30 January, Israeli aircraft had violated Syrian airspace and bombarded a scientific research centre located near Damascus. He rejected media reports in which it had been asserted that the aircraft had targeted a convoy that was heading from the Syrian Arab Republic to Lebanon. While the United Nations has no details of and is not in a position to independently verify the events, I noted the reported incident with grave concern and called upon all concerned to prevent tensions or their escalation in the region and to strictly abide by international law, in particular in respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all countries in the region.

45. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued their efforts to counter smuggling from Lebanon into the Syrian Arab Republic. There were recurrent incidents of cross-border fire. Syrian armed forces fired small arms and heavier weapons into Lebanon and, on at least three occasions, an exchange of fire was initiated from Lebanese territory. On 25 December, a Lebanese child was killed by small arms fire into Lebanon from across the border. Between 23 and 24 February, at least two Lebanese men were killed by fire from the Syrian Arab Republic, prompting the President of Lebanon to file a protest, demand the cessation of firing and shelling towards Lebanon and stress the need for continued commitment to the policy of neutrality adopted by Lebanon. The movement of arms and fighters across the Lebanese-Syrian border continued. On 1 November, a Syrian national was killed and a number of Lebanese security personnel injured in a firefight after a vehicle attempted to

enter Lebanon illegally near the town of Arsal. On 30 November, a group of fighters, comprising 13 Lebanese, 3 Syrians and 1 Palestinian, was reportedly killed by Syrian regime forces at Tal Kalakh after they had crossed into the Syrian Arab Republic from Lebanon. On 17 February, there were reports of heavy cross-border fire in the northern Beqa'a Valley that was linked to fighting in nearby villages in the Syrian Arab Republic. There were further reports of Hizbullah fighters being killed, apparently in fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic, at that time and previously.

46. The movement of armed groups and weapons across the Lebanese-Syrian border and the recurrent cross-border incidents again highlighted the need for the Lebanese security forces to have greater means at their disposal to manage and control the border. Donors announced additional assistance for the Lebanese authorities in that regard, some of it dedicated to continuing long-term efforts to strengthen and integrate border management involving all the relevant branches of the Lebanese security forces. The Lebanese Armed Forces have continued to work on a $1.6 billion plan to increase their capacity and capability. The plan has been presented within the Government at a high level and is expected to be submitted formally to donors soon. It looks to national and international funding to meet what are pressing needs.

47. There was a substantial rise in the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon during the reporting period, including after the intense fighting around Damascus in December. Of the 305,000 refugees officially receiving assistance in Lebanon, 78 per cent are estimated to be women and children. There was a notable increase in the presence of refugees south of the Litani River, with some 4,200 refugees registered in the area. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is planning to open a registration office in Tyre in the coming weeks. In all areas, winter conditions made shelter a priority, and the shortfall in available assistance noted in my previous report became acute.

48. On 3 December, the Government of Lebanon unveiled a plan to address the needs of Syrian refugees, resisting calls to close the border to prevent further influxes. In the same month, the United Nations submitted a revised regional plan that included an appeal for $267 million for Lebanon. I chaired the International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria, held on 30 January in Kuwait City, at which donors pledged in excess of $1.5 billion to support Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries, including Lebanon, and those displaced by the conflict inside the Syrian Arab Republic. In Lebanon, the United Nations humanitarian presence grew rapidly on the ground and intensive efforts were made to accelerate registration.

49. Palestinian refugees continued to seek shelter in camps in Lebanon after their camps in the Syrian Arab Republic came under attack. There was a large influx of Palestinians into Lebanon from 17 to 20 December, including after the intense fighting in the Palestinian-populated Yarmouk area of Damascus. As at 25 February, some 31,500 Palestinians from the Syrian Arab Republic had approached the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Lebanon, including 5,200 Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic who recently arrived south of the Litani River. UNRWA is seeking to provide assistance in cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

E. Landmines and cluster bombs

50. The Lebanon Mine Action Centre, a unit of the Lebanese Armed Forces, is the national authority for mine action in Lebanon with responsibility for the management of all humanitarian clearance and mine action data. The United Nations Mine Action Support Team is a United Nations Mine Action Service programme implemented in support of UNIFIL demining activities along the Blue Line by providing training to contingents, in addition to conducting validation and quality assurance monitoring. Eight military manual clearance teams, three military explosives ordnance disposal teams and one military mechanical clearance team are currently deployed in the UNIFIL area of operations. More than 809.94 m^2 of lanes providing access to Blue Line points were cleared during the reporting period. In addition, 10 anti-personnel mines and an item of unexploded ordnance were found and destroyed, while 2 Blue Line points were cleared and the clearance of 2 others began. Meanwhile, the United Nations Mine Action Service continued to conduct training for UNIFIL military and civilian personnel, in addition to quality assurance visits to operational sites and demonstrations.

F. Delineation of borders

51. There was again no progress towards delineating and demarcating the Syrian-Lebanese border, including in areas where it is uncertain or disputed, as called for by the Security Council in resolutions 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). Cross-border violence as a result of the Syrian crisis again highlighted the importance of delineation and demarcation as soon as practicable.

52. There was also no progress on the issue of the Shab'a Farms area. Neither the Syrian Arab Republic nor Israel has reacted to the provisional definition of that area contained in my report of 30 October 2007 on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2007/641).

III. Security and safety of the Force

53. UNIFIL and the Lebanese authorities continued to cooperate closely to ensure the safety and security of all UNIFIL personnel. Complementing the measures taken by the Government, UNIFIL continued to apply its own risk mitigation measures. It continuously reviewed its security plans and risk mitigation measures and carried out safety awareness training for its personnel. Physical infrastructure and equipment upgrades of UNIFIL headquarters are continuing to ensure the protection of the Force.

54. UNIFIL continued to observe proceedings in the Lebanese military court against suspects involved in cases of serious attacks, actual or planned, against UNIFIL peacekeepers, the latest of which took place in 2011. Appeal court hearings, concerning sentences handed down in October 2012 in the case of an intended attack against UNIFIL in 2008, were postponed again until July 2013 for procedural reasons.

IV. Deployment of the Force

55. As at 13 February 2013, the total military strength of UNIFIL stood at 10,826, including 383 women. The civilian component consisted of 337 international and 655 national civilian staff members, including 101 and 164 women, respectively. UNIFIL is also supported by 51 United Nations Truce Supervision Organization military observers of the Observer Group Lebanon, including 1 woman.

56. Since my previous report, Spain has reduced its contribution of troops to UNIFIL by some 25 per cent to 701 and announced a further reduction by May 2013. Meanwhile, Serbia has deployed an infantry platoon within the Spanish battalion under a bilateral agreement with Spain. In the course of the rightsizing of some UNIFIL units pursuant to the recommendations of the recent military capability study, Indonesia reduced its deployment from 1,446 to 1,188 troops.

57. The current composition of the Maritime Task Force is seven vessels (three frigates, one corvette and three fast patrol boats) and two helicopters. The new Brazilian flagship arrived on 13 January 2013. UNIFIL is awaiting the arrival of a new Indonesian vessel expected in April, which will bring the total number of Task Force vessels back to the requirement of eight.

V. Observations

58. I welcome the continuing calm in the UNIFIL area of operations and along the Blue Line. I commend the parties for preserving stability in the area amid the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and for demonstrating strong commitment to safeguarding the cessation of hostilities. Nevertheless, there were a few incidents that had the potential to spark a serious escalation. I urge both parties to continue working with UNIFIL to maintain the current calm, to minimize and halt violations, to look for practical localized solutions and to build on what has been achieved by strengthening the liaison and coordination arrangements between them.

59. I remain concerned at the lack of progress towards achieving a permanent ceasefire and long-term solution to the conflict, as envisaged in resolution 1701 (2006). In line with the requirements for the full implementation of that resolution, I hope that the parties will move from the current fragile cessation of hostilities and find that it is in their mutual interest to work towards achieving a permanent ceasefire and long-term solution to the conflict. I encourage all concerned to recommit themselves to that goal and to work with my Special Coordinator and UNIFIL to identify ways forward in this regard.

60. Major obligations under the resolution remain outstanding and require action by both parties. I am concerned that unauthorized weapons remain in the UNIFIL area of operations, in contravention of the resolution, as evidenced during the reporting period by the attempt to launch rockets from the area of operations. The explosion in the vicinity of Tayr Harfa during the reporting period also raises concern. The Lebanese authorities have the primary responsibility for ensuring that there are no unauthorized armed personnel, assets or weapons in the area. In this context, I also call upon both parties to cooperate fully with UNIFIL investigations to help to ascertain the facts of these incidents and violations by facilitating access to people, places and relevant information in their possession.

61. I remain concerned that violations of Lebanese airspace continue to be committed almost daily by Israel. The use of fighter jets and attack helicopters flying at low altitude during the reporting period raised particular concern. I call again upon the Government of Israel to cease all overflights of Lebanese territory and territorial waters. The continuing occupation of northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line by the Israel Defense Forces also represents a continuing violation of resolution 1701 (2006). Israel has an obligation to withdraw its armed forces from the area, in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006).

62. The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic continues to pose serious challenges for the security and stability of Lebanon. The lack of progress in delineating and demarcating the Lebanese-Syrian border is no justification for the serious and repeated violations of Lebanese territorial integrity, which have caused death, injury and material damage to property. I call upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cease all violations of the border and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006).

63. The reported involvement of certain Lebanese elements in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic is contrary to the policy of disassociation adopted by Lebanon. I note with grave concern reports of the Tal Kalakh incident involving Lebanese nationals and of further deaths of Hizbullah members fighting inside the Syrian Arab Republic. The dangers for Lebanon of such involvement and indeed of continued cross-border arms smuggling are obvious. I call upon all Lebanese political leaders to act to ensure that Lebanon remains neutral in respect of external conflicts consistent with their commitment in the Baabda Declaration.

64. I remain concerned about the political stalemate that has continued to prevail in the wake of the assassination of Brigadier-General Wisam al-Hassan on 19 October 2012. I commend the leadership of the President and his efforts to minimize political tensions and ensure continued stability in Lebanon in the face of the protracted conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. I am concerned that disagreements over the electoral law have overshadowed the necessary preparations for the elections. I encourage all parties in Lebanon to work to ensure that elections are held on a consensual basis within the legal and constitutional time frame. The United Nations continues to provide technical support to those responsible for preparing the elections. I hope that the arrangements agreed upon will include measures to enhance the representation of women. I emphasize the importance of free, fair and credible elections in a timely fashion for the stability and continued political advancement of Lebanon.

65. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups outside the control of the State continues to pose a threat to Lebanese sovereignty and stability, and stands in contradiction to the country's obligations under resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). I regret the inability of the Lebanese leaders to meet within the framework of the National Dialogue during the reporting period to discuss this and other issues and encourage all concerned to heed the President's call for the resumption of dialogue as soon as possible. I remain of the view that the goal of ensuring that there are no weapons outside the control of the State can be achieved only through a Lebanese-led political process that has this as its aim and believe that the National Dialogue remains the best mechanism to achieve it. In this context, I reiterate my call for the implementation of earlier decisions of the National Dialogue,

specifically those relating to the disarmament of non-Lebanese groups and the dismantling of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada military bases.

66. I welcome the continued efforts of the Lebanese security forces to maintain stability throughout the country. It is important that they continue to receive needed backing from across the political spectrum for their work and that redoubled efforts be made to tackle sources of repeated violence, such as that which occurred in Tripoli. The recurrence of violent incidents underlines the extent to which Lebanon needs to take further specific steps to counter the prevalence of weapons outside the authority of the State and to ensure the effective implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). I remind all Member States of their obligations under that resolution to prevent the sale or the supply of arms and related materiel to entities or individuals in Lebanon except those authorized by the Government of Lebanon. I call upon the Lebanese authorities to hold accountable those involved in the violent incidents noted in the present and previous reports consistent with the extension of control of the Government over all Lebanese territory as called for in resolution 1701 (2006). I also reiterate the Security Council's call for the perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of the assassination of Brigadier-General Wisam al-Hassan to be brought to justice, together with those involved in the attempted assassination of political figures in 2012. It is unacceptable that political leaders in Lebanon should continue to have reason to fear for their lives. Steps must be taken to allay such fears.

67. I take this opportunity to welcome the unity shown by leaders in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon in working together, and with the Lebanese authorities, to maintain order against the backdrop of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. I also welcome the decision of the Government of Lebanon to continue to support the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee for a further three years. There is an urgent need to improve the living conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, without prejudice to the resolution of the refugee question in the context of a comprehensive peace settlement. The influx of several thousand additional Palestinian refugees displaced from the Syrian Arab Republic into the already extremely cramped camps in Lebanon has imposed a heavy new burden on the inhabitants and on UNRWA in its efforts to assist them. I strongly urge Member States to further support the work of UNRWA in the light of the heavy additional pressures on its resources.

68. I pay tribute to the Government and people of Lebanon for their hosting of and assistance to the Syrian refugees and welcome the commitment of the Government to keeping its borders open to allow those displaced by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic to seek refuge in Lebanon. The rate at which new refugees have crossed into Lebanon in the past two reporting periods has accelerated markedly and creates increasing challenges within the country. I call upon the international community to recognize the appeals of the Lebanese leadership in this regard and to provide assistance accordingly. Funds pledged at the International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria should help to alleviate the burden on the Government and people and I thank all those who responded so generously to the appeals. Swift delivery of these pledges is now a key priority if the suffering of the refugees is to be alleviated and if Lebanon is to sustain its capacity to respond to increased numbers of refugees at the current rates of influx. I therefore urge the Government to continue to plan accordingly. The United Nations will continue to stand by Lebanon in tackling this challenge until such time as the refugees are able to return to their homes.

69. I am concerned about incidents restricting the freedom of movement of UNIFIL and instances of aggressive behaviour towards UNIFIL personnel. While the number of incidents is marginal relative to the overall number of operational activities conducted by the Force, some of these incidents are in violation of resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1773 (2007) and have the potential to escalate and compromise operations. The Force's freedom of movement is integral to the effective implementation of its mandate and the Lebanese authorities are primarily responsible for ensuring that UNIFIL can operate unhindered to this end.

70. The demands on the Lebanese Armed Forces during the reporting period have been heavy — in the south of the country alongside UNIFIL, along the border with the Syrian Arab Republic and in terms of internal security — and all have been against the backdrop of intense regional turbulence and consequent political and sectarian tensions inside Lebanon. It is encouraging that the Lebanese Armed Forces have, for the first time, at the prompting of the Government, sought to prioritize strategically their immediate needs in the light of these multiple challenges, including through the elaboration of a plan to enhance their capabilities.

71. I commend the Lebanese Armed Forces for their strong cooperation with UNIFIL, their multiple security responsibilities throughout Lebanon notwithstanding, in particular during periods of heightened tensions. I am grateful to those countries that continue to provide critical assistance and encourage the international community to demonstrate further its commitment to building the capacity of the Armed Forces, including the navy. In this context, it is imperative that UNIFIL and the Armed Forces remain focused on the strategic dialogue and that the process receive strong support from all national and international stakeholders.

72. I welcome the work carried out on the plan to enhance the capabilities of the Armed Forces and the efforts made to ensure that it reflects the requirements and objectives of the strategic dialogue. I encourage both the Government of Lebanon and the international community to be forthcoming in supporting the plan when it is finalized. I further stand ready to assist the Armed Forces and the Government of Lebanon as they seek to carry forward the plan. The United Nations will also continue to support the efforts of the Lebanese security agencies, in collaboration with donors, to improve integrated border management.

73. Regrettably, no progress has been made with regard to the Shab'a Farms area, in accordance with paragraph 10 of resolution 1701 (2006). I call, once again, upon the Syrian Arab Republic and Israel to submit their responses to the provisional definition of the Shab'a Farms area that I provided in October 2007 (see S/2007/641).

74. The focus on opportunities for oil and gas exploration in the eastern Mediterranean remained high during the reporting period, including on the potential benefits of exploitation of offshore resources for both Israel and Lebanon. I am hopeful that both countries can make progress on the delimitation of their respective maritime exclusive economic zones and make the necessary preparations for the exploration and exploitation of their resources in a manner that does not give rise to tensions. The United Nations stands ready to assist in this matter should both parties so request.

75. The Lebanese people have continued to show great resilience against the backdrop of regional developments and threats, in particular those relating to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. They have shown generosity in receiving so many of those fleeing from that conflict. They are now preparing for important elections. The arrangements set in place by resolution 1701 (2006) are responsible in significant part for the stability, albeit fragile, that makes all this possible. These arrangements are also responsible for the unprecedented calm that has continued to prevail across the Blue Line between Lebanon and Israel since 2006. Longer-term security and stability call for an end to conflict in the region, including progress towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. Continued commitment and efforts by the Governments of Lebanon and Israel to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) will remain vital through the current challenging period.

76. I wish to express my appreciation to all countries contributing troops and equipment to UNIFIL. I also commend the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander and the military and the civilian personnel of UNIFIL, in addition to the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the staff of his Office, all of whom continue to play a vital role in helping to promote stability along the Blue Line and in Lebanon.